

2. The Parishes and the Villages

- 2.1 Withington Group Parish Council covers three rural parishes located between 3 and 8 miles to the east/north east of Hereford City. The group covers some 6.7 sq. miles, and had a population of 1760 based in 680 household in 2011. The main development is in Withington. Westhide is the smallest parish with a population of 69. Preston Wynne is a parish of dispersed development along three miles of loop road, and small developments at Eau Withington, and Withington Marsh form other groups of development, the whole being separated by agricultural land and scattered dwellings. Whitestone Business Park provides the largest employment area. The parish is crossed by the A465 linking Hereford to Bromyard, and the A4103, Hereford to Worcester road. The main land use is agriculture, with both arable and livestock farms. The cultivation of hops played an important role in the agriculture of the three parishes but in recent years this has been replaced by other crops. 72% of dwellings are owner occupied and 26 % rented. 83 % of journeys to work are by private car, reflecting the rural nature of the area and the infrequency of public transport.

Withington

- 2.2 The village of Withington lies towards the south side of the parish, to the north of the Hereford to Worcester railway. The settlement was mentioned in the Domesday Book (1085 – 7) and there was a Saxon church on the site of St Peters Church.
- 2.3 In earlier years people were more widely distributed in the parish among various hamlets – Duke Street, Old Grove, Withington Marsh, Nunnington, EauWithington, White Stone, West Lydiatt, Veldo and the central area around Withington church. In 1851 there was a population of 713 with a variety of local craftsmen serving the agricultural community. Withington and its manors are mentioned in the Domesday book (1085-7), the name being spelt ‘Widingtune’. As with most rural villages the church was an important feature in the community. Two large private houses, two large farmhouses and several historic cottages are close to the church forming the old core of the settlement and located at the eastern end of an old ‘ridgeway’ (Veldo Lane).
In 1728 money was collected from the great and the good. £100 went towards a school – the original school at the Stallenge - of that - £10 built the school and £90 purchased land, the rent of which would pay the schoolmistress’ salary. At the same time £550 was collected to build a new house for the Rector! It remained a predominantly agricultural village until recent times with many of the residents supporting farming. The farms produced a variety of crops and many had cattle. In the twentieth century, the main farms also grew hops and until recently hop yards were an obvious feature of the area. The hop harvest needed significant seasonal labour. Their presence and the aroma of the drying hops were a feature of every September.
In 1851 record show that the trades of blacksmith and agricultural implement maker, carpenter, wheelwright, basket-maker and tanner were present. There was also a cooper who presumably supported the various public houses.
- 2.4 In 1844 the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal reached Withington at Withington Marsh having ‘entered’ the area at the northern edge of Westhide. Several buildings were developed around the canal basin at Withington Marsh. Very soon a new railway from Ledbury to Hereford was constructed on the southern edge of the parish and a station was opened in 1861, only to close exactly 100 years later in 1961. A tile works was developed adjoining the station. The site of the works is now the thriving Whitestone Business Park. Another site to the north of the A4103 became Anvil Enterprises, a business developing

timber frame buildings and then the original out-of-town supermarket known as Meadow Market, and later, as Norman's. The area today has been developed for housing and the village shop. The Post Office is close by and will shortly include a fish and chip shop.

- 2.5 A major change took place some forty + years ago when the then council built Withies Close, a relatively large social housing development in a small village. While some residents had local connections, many came from the city or elsewhere, and in the last 40 years Withington has continued to expand primarily southwards towards the Hereford to Worcester Road (A4103). In 2011 there were 610 dwellings in the Withington Parish. Many of the old cottages have been extended and modernised and houses and bungalows have been built as in-fill and five new housing estates have been erected. In addition, since 2011, over 140 dwellings have been approved and an 80 place care home. With the exception of White Stone all the original small settlements are still identifiable. (paragraph 2.3). The village has a Primary School, Village Hall, Church, Chapel, Village Store and Post Office. The nearest public house is the Cross Keys at Withington Marsh. The new village hall was built in 1999 with greater and more modern facilities than the 1920's hall in Veldo Lane A new public open space, Withington Fields, has been developed by the parish council for formal and informal recreation next to the Village Hall. This 2.43 hectares site became a Fields in Trust in 2013 and has a BMX track, play equipment and football pitches. A more recent addition is a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).



Withington Fields